

How do you want to be remembered?

How your interviewers perceive you in the job interview and how they remember you depends on your communication. And the order in which you offer information is crucial.

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A frequently asked question at the beginning of the job interview is something like this or similar: «Please introduce yourself.» The aim of this question is to get a brief overview of the applicant's professional career to date. Ideally, the question is answered when a thread in the career becomes visible that leads directly to the new job in question.

A few years ago, I asked exactly this question during a job interview training to a Head of Communications of a well-known industrial company. She led a team of 20 specialists in internal and external communications.

Inner images matter

She structured her answer chronologically by telling her professional career from the past to the present. Her first sentence was: «Twenty years ago, when I started at the company as assistant to the CEO...». Even today, years later, I have the image in my mind that I created back then: A young assistant with a pad and pencil sitting opposite the CEO and taking notes. Throughout the rest of the conversation, I fought this image internally and kept telling myself: «She's responsible for all communication and manages 20 employees.»

Mental images are like first impressions: You

almost never get rid of them. Information at the beginning of a narration is the one that sticks most strongly. In addition, it sets a reference point to which we orient the interpretation of the following information. Therefore, be sure to tell the story in reverse chronological order. In that example, it looked like this: «I work for company X as Head of Communications and manage 20 employees in internal and external communications...».

Put a point at the end

I had a similar experience recently with a sales manager of a large industrial company with a remarkable career. He managed a demanding division with many employees. He had started as a car mechanic. With great professional commitment, combined with ongoing further training, he developed rapidly. You can already guess the image that comes to mind when I think of him: a jacked-up sports car, in front of it my customer in an oil-smeared blue overall.

We then changed the self-presentation and he told his career in reverse chronological order in the next job interview. His interview partners had to laugh heartily when he concluded the description of his impressive career with the surprising sentence: «And I started my career as a car mechanic.»

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